

FLATHEAD COUNTY SELF-HELP LAW CENTER  
FLATHEAD COUNTY JUSTICE CENTER  
920 South Main  
Kalispell, MT 59901

EXHIBIT 11  
DATE 2-3-2011  
HB \_\_\_\_\_

Peg L. Allison  
Clerk of District Court  
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Resource Officer  
406-758-2495

February 1, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Clerk of District Court for Flathead County and the Manager of the Self-Help Law Center in Kalispell, I would like to express my views regarding the Center and the CourtHelp Program as a whole by means of this letter since I am unable to be present in person.

In the last several years the self-represented litigant – a complete oddity in the 1980's, becoming prevalent in the 90's and now common place – is appearing in 80% of the domestic relations cases in the district courts across Montana. Attempting to assist this huge number of people with documents and the process of moving a case through the court system is extremely burdensome to the courts, and more specifically, to the clerks of the district courts.

The Supreme Court has been intent upon seeing to it that the citizens of Montana realize their right to access to justice. The Self-Help Law Centers have been a critical part of that vision and are proving to be an invaluable resource for clerks to reference for the pre-se litigant.

In addition, the onset of the Centers has created avenues for cooperation and communication between government agencies and the courts that were virtually non-existent previously. The CourtHelp Program has caused a pooling of efforts with Montana Legal Services, attorneys interested in providing pro bono services, local colleges and universities providing student interns and volunteers, the Montanan's for Justice Project (Americorps members), and the Child Support Enforcement Division. Working together as a team is what it's all about. The Supreme Court is making this teamwork happen and our citizens are the beneficiaries.

The net effect of these cooperative efforts has been astounding and the lives of folks that I see and work with everyday have been bettered in ways I could never have imagined. These folks, with tears in their eyes, are telling judges on the bench how blessed they were to have the assistance of the nice people in the Self-Help Law Center. You see it in their eyes when they come to my office after a hearing for a final decree of dissolution or a parenting plan. We are helping them close a chapter in their lives so they can move on with their lives - hopefully making better choices and becoming more productive active citizens in our communities.

I strongly encourage all members of the 2011 Legislature to support funding for the Supreme Court so the efforts of the CourtHelp Program can continue.

Cordially,



Peg L. Allison